MANAGING COUNTERINSURGENCY: LESSONS FROM MALAYA

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Without a reasonably efficient government machine, no programmes or projects, in the context of counterinsurgency, will produce the desired results.

—Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.[1]

COMBATING AN INSURGENCY tests a government to its fullest. To succeed, the government must bring to bear all the elements of national power (political, military, and social) in a coordinated campaign. The absence of such coordination can result in a lack of clear authority, inadequate intelligence analysis, poorly integrated efforts by civilian agencies, and military operations that fail to achieve their desired effect.

The problem of achieving unity of effort is significantly more complicated for an outside power attempting to support a partner against an insurgency. The outside power must channel its efforts through the partner's political and social system, and success requires a high degree of coordination via management structures tailored to the needs of the specific situation.

The U.S. Army's recently released Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, recognizes the importance of effective coordination, advising that "military efforts are necessary and important to counterinsurgency efforts, but they are only effective when integrated into a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power."[2] It further recognizes that the traditional imperative of unity of command is not likely to be achieved in a counterinsurgency operation. "An insurgency's complex diplomatic, informational, military and economic context precludes military leaders from commanding all contributing organizations—and they should not try to do so. Interagency partners, NGOs, and private organizations have many interests and agendas that military forces cannot control . . . Nevertheless, military leaders should make every effort to ensure that COIN actions are as well integrated as possible."[3]

What are the mechanisms by which this interagency and inter-governmental integration can be achieved? FM 3-24 highlights the unity of effort achieved in Vietnam through the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support organization. Yet this is only one method of integrating civil and military efforts in counterinsurgency. The British achieved effective integration in a host of successful counterinsurgency campaigns through the employment of an executive-committee system. Among these campaigns was the Malayan Emergency, a British-led campaign against Communist guerrillas that lasted from 1948 to 1960. The Malayan Emergency is an example of successful coordination between the civil and military elements of government as well as between multiple nations. Making war by committee is not usually the best approach to military operations, but the British experience in Malaya is a case

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of a successful counterinsurgency effort conducted against the backdrop of a complex political arrangement. It demonstrates one method of achieving close coordination and effective management of civil and military resources.

The British effort in Malaya followed a familiar pattern: at the start of the insurgency, authorities lacked adequate command and coordination structures. Initial attempts to coordinate government efforts fell short. Only through a process of analysis and adjustment did an effective coordination structure eventually emerge: joint (civil-military) and combined (British-Malayan) executive committees directed the operational conduct of the counterinsurgency campaign.[4]

Throughout its history with irregular warfare, the United States has often found itself in the position of supporting an ally's counterinsurgency effort. Present circumstances suggest that this task will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. When U.S. forces must wrestle with the problem of how to integrate supporting elements from the United States with the host-nation government to achieve unity of effort in a counterinsurgency campaign, history can offer a necessary supplement to existing doctrine to produce a complete answer. The Malayan Emergency is one such exemplary supplement.

Pre-Emergency Malaya

Approximately the same size as England, with three-quarters of the country covered in thick jungle forests, Malaya was a guerrilla's paradise. Huge trees blocked out most of the sunlight in the coastal forests and swamps. A mountain chain extended 300 miles south from the border with Thailand, dividing the Malayan peninsula into two halves. Approximately 90 percent of the population lived in a coastal plain that extended 10 miles deep along the western coast of the peninsula.

In 1947, the area had a population of 5 million, of which 2.5 million were ethnic Malay, 2 million were ethnic Chinese, and approximately half a million were Indian. Even though they made up nearly half the population, few Chinese were citizens—and there was no widespread support for extending citizen rights and privileges to the rest.[5]

Malaya's importance to the British in the postwar period cannot be overstated. At the time of the insurgency, Malayan exports, particularly rubber and tin, were the most important source of U.S. dollars in Britain's colonial empire. A serious disruption to Malayan industry would have had widespread economic repercussions for the entire British Commonwealth.[6]

At the outbreak of the Emergency, in 1948, the Federation of Malaya's newly established government was not configured to effectively conduct a coordinated counterinsurgency campaign. The Japanese occupation during World War II had destroyed most of the territory's pre-war administrative structure. According to one historian, "In much of the Malayan peninsula, the British presence ceased [and] colonial communities evaporated."[7] In many ways, the British-led government was starting anew in Malaya after Japanese forces there surrendered in 1945. The difficulties of governance were compounded by the fact that Malaya was not officially

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Sergeant William Goldie of the 1st Battalion, the Loyal (North Lancashire) Regiment, searches a Malay cyclist on a road near Ipoh for supplies or material he might be smuggling through to the communist guerillas, 1957.

a possession of the British Crown; rather, it was a group of nine British-protected Malay states and two settlements, each with its own ruler, organized as a federation. The leading British authority in Malaya was High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney, who had the power to make decisions about the conduct of defense and foreign relations. However, in the domestic sphere, his proposals required the approval of the federation's Legislative Council, which consisted of a handful of senior civil servants and departmental officials, as well as representatives of each Malay state and 50 appointed members representing different interests—employers, labor, industry, commerce, and so forth.

Gurney was limited in the scope of domestic legislation he could impose on the rulers of individual Malay states, similar to the way a U.S. president is limited in directing governors of states to take action. As one cabinet official noted, "The Malay states… are a powerful force, and the federal machine can only work with their confidence and goodwill."[8]

The government of Malaya was administered by the Malayan Civil Service, an elite group of less than 300 senior civil servants, the majority of whom were British. A few thousand middle managers, 75 percent of whom were also British, supported the government's operations. At the bottom level of the government, 80 percent of the employees were Malay. The relatively small size of the civil service hindered its ability to perform its duties, particularly when the Communist insurgency challenged the government.

A sultan ruled each of the nine Malay states with his *menteri besar* (literally, "big minister") advising him. A British advisor assigned to each state also provided guidance, but possessed no executive powers—his ability to influence events depended strictly on his powers of persuasion.

The Malay states were subdivided into 71 districts, each headed by a district officer, typically a member of the Malayan Civil Service. Duties and roles varied across districts, but the district officer had a wide range of responsibilities, including functioning as a chief magistrate and collector of land revenues, in addition to performing ceremonial duties.[9]

Coordinating the actions of nine semi-sovereign states via a federal government was a cumbersome process and one not well suited to confronting an insurgent threat—particularly one that crossed state boundaries with impunity.

Security Forces

The police were primarily responsible for domestic security in the federation. In 1948, there were only about 10,000 police officers across Malaya, the force being 2,000 officers below its authorized strength. Police personnel were under the command of the chief police officer of their state. The federation government could request states to take particular police actions, but by and large, it could only act as a coordinating authority. As a final recourse, the federation government could call on the British Army for support if the police faced a challenge beyond their ability.

The British Army in Malaya was under the command of General Headquarters, Far Eastern Land Forces, and possessed a combined 12 infantry battalions and an artillery battalion for Malaya and neighboring Singapore. The military forces in Malaya were not on a wartime footing in 1948. Less than half the soldiers in country were combat troops, and most were in training or performing peacetime administrative duties.

The Malayan Races Liberation Army

Opposing the Malayan Government was the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA)—the armed wing of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).[10] The MRLA was the successor to the Communist-led resistance group that had fought against the Japanese occupation during World War II. Despite its name, the MRLA did not represent Malaya's races in any real sense. Like the Communist Party itself, over 95 percent of the MRLA's membership was ethnic Chinese. In the early months of the emergency, the MRLA had 7,000 armed fighters and 30,000 to 40,000 active supporters, known as the Min Yuen, who provided money, food, intelligence, and communications support.[11]

The Communist strategy was to carry out widespread attacks on civil officials and the managers of rubber plantations and tin mines in an attempt to disrupt Malaya's economy. The MRLA believed that such attacks would force the government to concentrate its forces to protect its communications and supply lines, allowing the Communists to establish liberated areas in the places security forces could not cover. Establishing revolutionary administrations within these liberated areas would

legitimize the Communists in the eyes of the population and provide bases for the further training of MRLA military forces. As the guerrillas increased in strength, they would expand their liberated areas and field larger military units, until they could eventually force the government to surrender.[12]

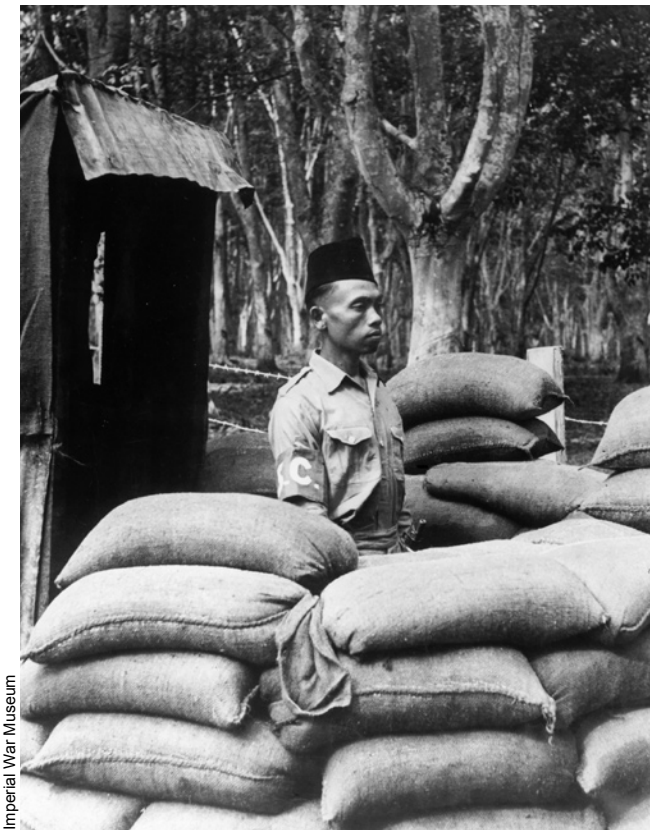
The Emergency: Early Responses, 1948-1950

In early June 1948, a series of violent, politically inspired crimes shattered Malaya's post-war tranquility. The pattern of violence implicated the Malaysian Communist Party: the targets were the managers of large estates and local leaders of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist) Party. The simultaneous murder of three European planters and a Chinese supervisor in Perak state on 16 June led authorities to realize that the violence in Malaya was spreading beyond their control.[13] The following day, the high commissioner declared a state of emergency across the federation. Emergency regulations were quickly put into place that permitted searches of persons or premises without warrants, authorized the detention of anyone suspected of involvement in the insurgency, and provided the death penalty for unauthorized possession of a firearm.[14]

A long history of colonial policing led the British to develop the view that, in the initial response to a crisis, the military should act in support of and at the direction of the civil power. The British would resort to martial law only if the civil authority proved wholly incapable of action. This approach suited the British Army, which opposed the idea that its soldiers should act as police officers in the colonies. In the Army's view, the police, with their knowledge of local customs and languages, were better equipped to control civilians.

This last assumption proved to be faulty in the case of Malaya because the police were overwhelmingly ethnic Malay while the Communists and their guerrilla cadres were overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese. The lack of Chinese policemen and Chinese-speaking officers hampered police work as the Communists drew support almost entirely from 500,000 Chinese squatters who lived as rubber tappers along the jungle fringes.[15]

Appointing an experienced senior police officer was the first step in reinforcing the civil authority's ability to direct counterinsurgency efforts. In August 1948, the federation government named W.N. Gray the commissioner of police. Gray, who previously had served in Palestine where he had firsthand experience with terrorism and guerrilla warfare, had two primary duties as commissioner—to oversee a ten-fold expansion of the police force and to take the lead in the federation's counterinsurgency effort.[16] The government did not provide Gray with any additional executive authority for the latter task beyond that which his office traditionally held. As a result, Gray was simply one of many senior federation officials involved in the counterinsurgency effort, rather than a true guiding force. The daunting task of expanding the police force further undercut Gray's ability to provide guidance. The commissioner and his small staff had a full-time job on their hands recruiting and training 90,000 new police and auxiliaries. At the state and district levels, the situation was much the same: the existing police force was preoccupied with regular policing duties and had little time for planning counterinsurgency strategies.



Imperial War Museum

A Malay special constable stands guard at a sentry post at the entrance to a rubber plantation, 1949.

Once the new police commissioner was in place, the federation's senior civil servant, Chief Secretary M.V. del Tufo, was selected to oversee all Emergency operations. Although he was a veteran of the Malayan Civil Service, del Tufo had no experience working in the districts, and many considered him an administrator of dubious quality.[17] Furthermore, he was a staff officer and did not have the authority to give direct orders to the police or the military. This resulted in a division of authority whereby Commissioner of Police Gray handled police-military aspects of the Emergency and Chief Secretary del Tufo handled all other issues.

The divided command structure, combined with Gray and del Tufo's heavy administrative burdens, prevented the two men from providing real leadership to counterinsurgency efforts. In their place, the commander-in-chief for Far Eastern Land Forces and the general officer commanding, Malaya, the senior military officers in Malaya, took the lead in operational planning for the counterinsurgency while attempting to appear as though they were playing only supporting roles to the civil authorities.[18]

Emergency operations at the state and district levels suffered from the same dysfunctional command and control that the federal level did. Nevertheless, the initial response to the outbreak of violence was positive: within two months, all nine Malay states had established joint police-military intelligence committees to coordinate information on the insurgents. However, the police had difficulty contributing to the joint effort. Across Malaya, the police lacked the training and ability to acquire the intimate local knowledge required to combat subversion. Most police officers functioned as little more than paramilitary guards.[19] Fighting subversive propaganda, sabotage, and armed terrorism was primarily a police task, but the responsibility fell to the military simply because it had the capacity to act where the civil administration did not.

Coordination of the counterinsurgency effort proceeded in this way for nearly two years. The Army dispersed several large guerrilla units and forced them to take refuge in the jungles on the edges of the squatter areas, but the civil authorities and police did not provide the leadership required to defeat the insurgency. Without action by the civilian authorities, military means alone could not achieve victory over the Communist terrorists.

Insurgent attacks took a continual toll on the Malayan populace. In 1948, the MRLA killed or wounded 886 civilians and security force personnel. After a brief respite, the MRLA increased the tempo of its operations, causing an additional 1,161 casualties in 1950. The British Government's decision to recognize the Communist regime of Mao Tse-tung in January 1950 contributed to the perception in Malaya that the British were losing their struggle against the Communists.[20]

By that time, it was clear that a restructuring of the government's command and control system was necessary. The local representatives of the British Defense Staff suggested that a single civilian coordinator report directly to the high commissioner and be given the task of prosecuting the counterinsurgency campaign.[21]

General Briggs, 1950-1951

The federation government belatedly recognized that the burden of overseeing the police force's expansion was keeping Police Commissioner Gray from providing guidance to the security forces; it therefore requested Britain select a qualified candidate to become "Director of Anti-Bandit Operations," also known as the director of operations, or simply "the DO." To maintain the tradition of civilian supremacy, the British Government selected a retired Army officer, Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs, for the post. In addition to his considerable administrative experience, Briggs had commanded units fighting against Communist guerrillas in Burma in the late 1940s.

As the DO, Briggs could coordinate the actions of the police and the armed forces, although he did not have formal control over them. Within the federation, Briggs held a rank equal to that of Chief Secretary del Tufo, but he had to go through del Tufo to get access to the high commissioner.

Briggs' plan to defeat the MRLA was to put them on the defensive by seizing the initiative.[22] The first step was to deny the insurgents access to food and support. To accomplish this, the Chinese squatters living on the fringes of the jungle, the primary source of food for the MRLA cadres in the area, were resettled into well-defended villages. The insurgents were further harried by the deployment of Army "striking forces" that moved systematically state by state across the country from south to

north scattering the guerrilla bands and insurgents. These forces would patrol aggressively and lay ambushes across jungle tracks within a five-hour radius of a known MRLA unit's area of operations. Denied easy access to food, the insurgents had to choose between fighting government forces to acquire enough provisions to sustain themselves and breaking into smaller units that were less effective militarily. As it cleared areas, the government built up state administrative and police networks so that, when the striking forces moved on, the Communists would not be able to re-infiltrate the areas successfully.

Recognizing that successful implementation of this strategy required efficient civil-military cooperation, Briggs focused his attention on the federation, state, and district coordination committees organized in the early days of the Emergency. He standardized their structure, ensuring that every level of government had such a committee and that the committees included representatives of the civil authorities, the armed forces, and the police. Briggs transformed the committees from coordinating committees to "war executive committees" charged with the responsibility for conducting counterinsurgency operations in their areas of responsibility.

To coordinate matters at the federation level, a Federal War Council was created in April 1950. In addition to Briggs and the high commissioner, the council included the general officer commanding, Malaya; the air officer commanding, Malaya; the chief secretary; the secretary of defense; and the commissioner of police. Under the direction of the high commissioner, the council formulated Emergency policy and allocated resources.[23] Creating a single executive body that included the heads of all agencies involved in responding to the Emergency streamlined the decision-making process and improved interagency information sharing. Significantly, the Federal War Council could make funds available to state- and district-level entities without having to gain item-by-item approval from the federation's Legislative Council.[24]

The state and district war executive committees (SWECs and DWECs respectively) were subordinate to the council and had the power to give orders to the local civil authority, police, and armed forces. The SWECs' and DWECs' core membership consisted of the senior civil servant, senior soldier, and senior police officer in the area. Technical experts and representatives of key community groups attended committee meetings as needed.[25] Through this mechanism, stove piping, the traditional bane of interagency operations, was overcome, and the coordination of all relevant government agencies with the security forces was achieved at all levels through a single command structure.

Sixty DWECs were created across Malaya. They were small and structured for quick reaction and decision making. In addition to their core membership, intelligence officers, police officials from adjacent districts, and prominent local citizens attended their meetings. Because the insurgents' Achilles' heel was their need for contact with the local population, the district level became the "tip of the spear" of the government's counterinsurgency effort. Under the Emergency regulations, DWECs had extensive authority in their districts: they could order police and military operations, set curfews, resettle squatters, control the distribution of food supplies, and so forth. The inclusion of civilian, police, and military leaders in the DWECs allowed the civil authorities and the security forces to work hand in hand. Local officials could persuade the military not to conduct operations likely to prove more damaging to the civilian population than to the MRLA, and the military could make civil authorities aware of the unnecessary constraints local regulations placed on their freedom of operation.[26] The high degree of flexibility combined with executive authority imparted to the DWECs allowed each DWEC to tailor counterinsurgency operations to the unique local conditions and circumstances.

While the DWECs focused their attention on day-to-day issues in their areas of operations, the SWECs took the strategic view. The state's menteri besar, who acted in the name of the local ruler, presided over each SWEC, while the state's British advisor, who attended all meetings but had no executive powers, assisted him. The representative of the Malayan Civil Service filled the role of SWEC executive secretary, ensuring that decisions for action were recorded and disseminated. Empowered to make decisions, the SWEC could coordinate local efforts and act without waiting to consult with the government in Kuala Lumpur. If the state had a security concern, the local heads of

the police and the army were on the committee. If the state's Chinese community had issues of concern, the menteri besar became aware of it. If the state required focused propaganda messages to appeal to the local population, the state's information officer could respond.[27]

The heart of each War Executive Committee was its Joint Operations Room (JOR), in which police, navy, air force, and army personnel coordinated emergency operations and received, analyzed, and disseminated raw intelligence.[28] The Malayan Police's Special Branch supplied intelligence to the analysts in the JOR, and information from military patrols and interviews with private citizens supplemented that intelligence. The processing of intelligence was nonstop. At least one intelligence officer was on duty in the room 24 hours a day. Every morning, the War Executive Committee's core members would meet in the operations room for what they called "morning prayers." The intelligence officer on duty would report what had happened during the previous 24 hours, ensuring that the committee maintained an accurate picture of the current situation in its area of responsibility. The JOR was a key vehicle for daily coordination between the military, the police, and the civil administration.

Despite the host of reforms, positive results were not immediately apparent after the government implemented Briggs' plan. To the great frustration of ministers in London, the number of guerrilla incidents actually increased during the early part of Briggs' tenure. By early 1951, however, results began to be evident on the battlefield: the average number of contacts with guerrilla bands per month rose, as did the number of guerrillas who surrendered or were killed, while the number of terrorist attacks began to decline.

These successes did not obscure the fact that Briggs' reforms were insufficient to achieve a truly unified effort. As one British official noted, three years into the insurgency "neither Kuala Lumpur's writ nor even that of the D.O. runs smoothly or swiftly in the States. On one hand the central machine takes too long to answer queries from regions or to permit initiative; or on the other, local State Governments have natural but obstructive antipathy to the centre."[29] Despite reforms intended to enhance decision making and flexibility, the fundamental problem remained that "no important decision could be carried out until it had been ratified by eleven state and settlement governments, the federal government, and the government of Great Britain—thirteen in all. The military director of operations had limited authority and was hampered by the civil officials. They had a 'business-as-usual' tendency to carry on their normal work as if the revolt did not exist, and only assist the director of operations so far as they feel disposed to."[30]

As Briggs approached the end of his 18 months in Malaya, he strongly felt that his lack of command authority hindered his ability to get the Federation's police authorities to make the policy and organizational changes he deemed necessary. More than one historian has noted that "the executive impotence of this arrangement retarded the real effectiveness of his office."[31] Briggs was also frustrated by the fact that, as director of operations, he was number two in the government yet still had to refer decisions for the high commissioner through the civilian chief secretary. After Briggs' departure, an editorial in the *Straits Times* summed up the situation: "The original trouble was that there was no director of operations, and even no conception of the strength of the Communist challenge. It was a long time before there was effective cooperation between the police and the military and a longer time still before the government could bring itself to appoint a director of operations. When General Briggs came out, there was a reason to believe that the war at last would be fought as it should be fought. Yet when General Briggs left Malaya, just over a month ago, he revealed that he too never had the authority he needed."[32]

Templer Takes Charge, 1952-1953

In October 1951, two events occurred that would change the future of the counterinsurgency effort in Malaya. On 6 October, the MRLA ambushed and killed High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney while he was driving to a resort north of Kuala Lumpur. Gurney's murder shocked Malaya and made it clear that further measures were required to defeat the insurgents. Twenty days later, Winston Churchill became prime minister of Great Britain for the second time. Churchill strongly believed that a divided government had been responsible for the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942 and was sympathetic

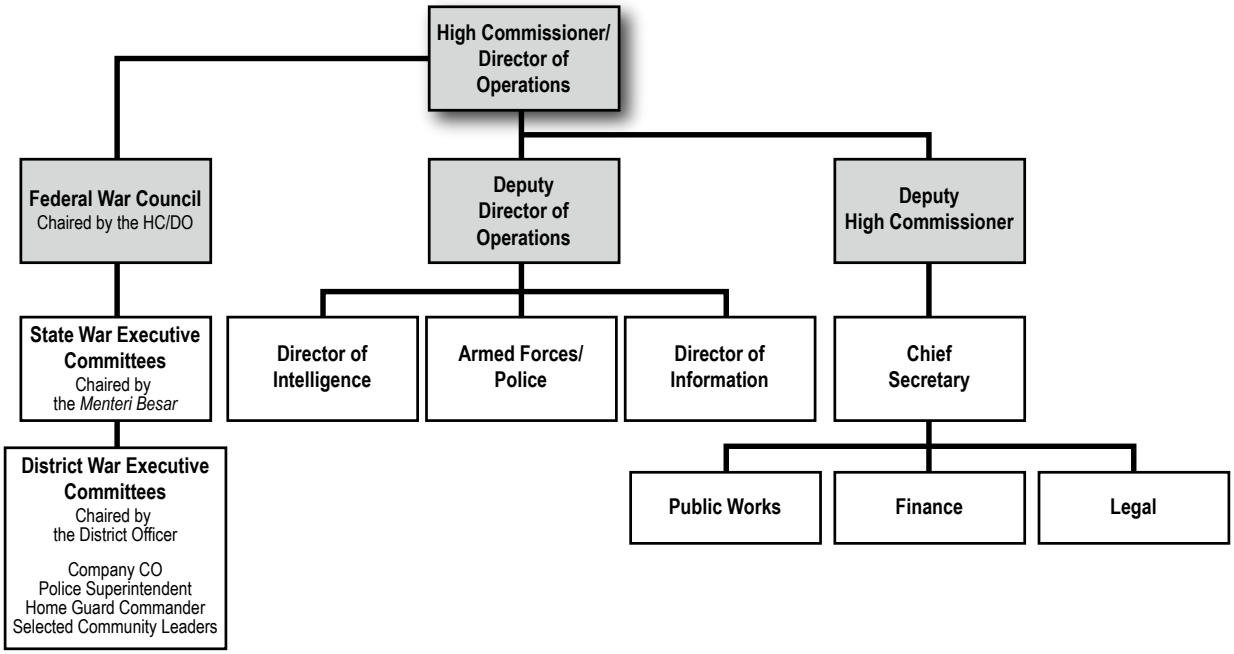


Figure 1. Malayan Counterinsurgency Organization as of December 1951.[33]

to arguments that the director of operations required command authority. With Gurney's death and Briggs' departure, the government needed to fill both the positions of high commissioner and DO.

In December 1951, acting on the colonial secretary's recommendation, Churchill's cabinet merged the posts of high commissioner and director of operations, thereby unifying control of civil and military forces. London believed the new post required a man who had "the courage to issue the necessary orders, the drive to insist that those orders are carried out, and the determination and will-power to see the thing through to the end."[34] The man London chose for the job was Sir Gerald Templer, a former vice chief of the Imperial General Staff, a past director of military intelligence, and Britain's youngest general during World War II. Templer was known as "a man of action and a soldier-administrator of the highest quality."[35] To free Templer from the "paper jungle" that his combined civil and military responsibilities would create, London created the posts of deputy high commissioner (civilian) and deputy director of operations (military) so that he could "turn his attention to the real jungle and its menace."

Templer believed the government should focus all its efforts on the counterinsurgency. Soon after arriving in country, he made this view known in a widely distributed memorandum: "Any idea that the business of normal civil government and the business of the Emergency are two separate entities must be killed for good and all. . . . The two activities are completely and utterly interrelated."[36] To underscore this point, Templer merged the high commissioner's cabinet, the Federal Executive Council, with the Federal War Council.

Aside from this organizational change, Templer's primary contribution to the conduct of the Emergency was his leadership and drive. Armed with powers denied to his predecessor, Templer implemented the Briggs plan aggressively. Leaving the day-to-day management of issues at the federation level to his assistants, he was constantly in the field.[37]

Templer believed, as did Briggs before him, that the struggle with the Communists was primarily a political one, and he made a lasting addition to the counterinsurgency lexicon when he declared that "the answer lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but *in the hearts and minds of the people*."[38]

Templer's tenure was the turning point for the counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya. Between 1952 and 1954, two-thirds of the MRLA were killed or captured, and Communist attacks declined from an average of 500 a month in 1951 to less than 90 a month by 1954. During the same period, security

force casualties, which had averaged nearly 100 a month in 1951, were down to 20 a month by 1954.[39] Relentless jungle patrols and the resettlement program severed the links between armed MRLA units and their Min Yuen supporters.

Handover, 1954-1957

By the middle of 1954, the Emergency's outcome was no longer in doubt. The MRLA was defeated, although a lengthy mopping-up stage remained. Having completed his tour of duty, Templer returned to England to become the chief of staff of the British Army. His tenure as joint high commissioner and director of operations proved to be unique. London reestablished traditional civilian control of the military by appointing Templer's civilian deputy, D.C. MacGillivray, to succeed him as high commissioner. Lieutenant General Sir Geoffrey Bourne became director of operations. (The position was once again subordinate to the position of high commissioner.)

In keeping with the counterinsurgency's political strategy, British authorities made it clear that Malaya would eventually become an independent nation. To facilitate the transition, Bourne expanded the membership of the SWECs and DWECs by including local political figures and prominent civilians. This helped expose Malaya's indigenous leaders to the types of challenges they would face after independence and associated them with the British-led counterinsurgency effort. The goal of this latter action was to cause key political leaders to identify with and internalize the "distasteful measures" required in the battle against the MRLA and to persevere until the guerrillas disbanded or fled.[40]

When the Federation of Malaya became independent on 31 August 1957, the process of Malayanization had proceeded to the point where all SWECs and DWECs had Malayan chairmen. Tunku Abdul Rahman, minister for internal defense and security (and later prime minister), became responsible for the overall conduct of Emergency operations. The DO answered to Rahman but retained operational command of all security forces.

Most senior army and police officers were still British, but they were servants of the government of Malaya. This was an important step in bolstering the government's legitimacy and undercutting the Communists' ability to attract nationalists to their cause. The British willingness to subordinate their officers to the Malayan Government after independence illustrates an important principle of assistance to counterinsurgency: when an outside power supports a host nation against an insurgency, it is critical that the host government should appear to be in charge, with the ally in a supporting role. As counterinsurgency practitioner Frank Kitson notes, "If there is the slightest indication of the ally taking the lead, the insurgents will have the opportunity to say that the government has betrayed the people to an outside power, and that they, the insurgents, are the only true representatives of the nation."[41]

The Malayan Emergency dragged on for three more years, as the last remnants of the MRLA were scattered and eventually driven across the border into Thailand. On 31 July 1960, the Malayan Government declared that the Emergency was over. Despite its successful outcome, the Malayan Emergency extracted a toll in time, blood, and treasure.

Imperial War Museum

Men of the Malay Regiment during a jungle patrol in the Temenggor area of northern Malaya, 1953.

From its initial declaration, the Emergency lasted slightly more than 12 years. Government security forces suffered an estimated 4,436 killed, wounded, or injured, and there were an additional 4,668 civilian casualties. MRLA casualties are reported to have been 13,191. Another 2,980 surrendered to the government. The total cost of prosecuting this conflict in today's terms was nearly $3.3 billion.[42]

Malaya and Current Doctrine

As Sir Robert Thompson observed, the most important element of a counterinsurgency campaign is the government and security force control-and-coordination structure. The need to synchronize interagency and host-nation efforts presents challenges beyond those of a traditional command. Achieving unity of effort can be very difficult, because it requires the integration of both civil and military elements of state power to achieve what are primarily political objectives. The executive committee system the British employed in Malaya represents one model of how to integrate these elements of national power into a unified effort. The salient feature of this approach was the establishment of executive committees at the federal and sub-federal levels that brought together the civil administration, the security forces, and the intelligence-gathering organizations. Although high-level policy direction became increasingly centralized at the federal level, responsibility for its execution devolved to officials at the state and district levels who worked in highly flexible committees that could adapt to local circumstances. In the case of Malaya, maximum effectiveness was achieved when a single individual, Sir Gerald Templer, was empowered to coordinate all aspects of the counterinsurgency campaign. This model served the British well, and they replicated it in later counterinsurgency campaigns in Kenya and Cyprus.

FM 3-24 suggests that the creation of civil-military operations centers (CMOCs) at each subordinate political level of the host-nation government can be an effective coordination mechanism when U.S. and multinational forces provide counterinsurgency support to a foreign country. "The CMOC coordinates the interaction of U.S. and multinational military forces with a wide variety of civilian agencies" such as governmental, nongovernmental, and international organizations, and third-nation agencies and authorities.[43]

Although the executive committee system the British employed in Malaya shares a number of similarities with the CMOC, there is an important distinction: the SWECs and DWECs were executive bodies designed to act as well as to coordinate. Under existing doctrine, "the CMOC is not designed as, nor should it be used as, a [command and control] element."[44]

However, the counterinsurgency experience in Malaya indicates that joint or even combined committees that only coordinate action may prove inadequate for the task, since seizing and maintaining the operational initiative from insurgents requires executive bodies that can take action and force their opponents to go on the defense.

FM 3-24 does incorporate some of the lessons of Templer's success in Malaya. Regarding U.S. efforts to support counterinsurgency, it states: "Command and control of all U.S. Government organizations engaged in a COIN mission should be exercised by a single leader through a formal command and control system."[45] The purpose of this action is to produce a unified goal and direction for American efforts. Unfortunately, the FM provides only an outline as to how a host nation should structure its counterinsurgency effort and how U.S. assistance efforts can be integrated into that structure. Helping develop such a structure can be a significant challenge for those assigned to advise a foreign counterinsurgency. For example, during much of the Vietnam War, "neither the Americans nor the Vietnamese had bodies capable of coordinating all aspects of their own war efforts, so every different type of aid had to be negotiated between the head of the relevant U.S. agency with his Vietnamese opposite number. More important still was the fact that no supreme council existed for the overall prosecution of the war on which the Americans could be represented."[46] No amount of aid or advice will achieve the desired result if the host nation does not implement an effective civil-military structure to coordinate its counterinsurgency efforts.

Though not applicable at all times and in all places, the committee structures employed during the Malayan Emergency provide one model for managing counterinsurgency. A country beset by an insurgency will probably not possess an effective

governmental coordination system at the outbreak of violence. If it did, it almost certainly would have detected subversive groups in the country and defeated them before they gained sufficient strength to initiate armed violence. The benefit of studying historical cases is that we can draw lessons from the experience of others. The British required four years of trial and error to arrive at a command and coordination system that allowed them to implement a unified counterinsurgency plan. Their success can serve as a guide to others facing the challenge of coordinating the disparate elements of national power to mount an effective counterinsurgency campaign. ***MR***

NOTES

All official British documents cited in this paper are from the Public Records Office, Kew Gardens, United Kingdom. This source is abbreviated PRO in the following citations.

1. Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966).
2. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2006), 2-1.
3. Ibid, 2-4
4. As the Emergency progressed, the British received military support and forces from Australia, New Zealand, and Rhodesia, making the Malayan Emergency a true multinational counterinsurgency effort.
5. Oliver Lyttelton, "Malaya," 21 December 1951, Cabinet Minutes and Papers (CAB) 129/48, C(51)59, PRO. On the topic of attitudes towards Chinese citizenship, Field Marshal Slim noted ". . . a number of the prewar British Malayan civil and police officers are, I think, still obsessed with the idea that Malaya is a country for Malayans only." Field Marshall Sir William Slim, "Note on Tour of South-East Asia," November 1949, Records of the Colonial Office (CO) 537/4374, no. 5, PRO.
6. Creech Jones, "The Situation in Malaya," 1 July 1948, CAB 129/28, CP(48)171, PRO.
7. Margaret Shennan, *Out in the Midday Sun: The British in Malaya 1880-1960* (London: John Murray, 2000), 241.
8. Griffiths, "Political and Economic Background to the Situation in Malaya," 15 November 1950, Records of the Prime Minister's Office (PREM) 8/1406/2, DO(50)94, PRO.
9. For one account of the variety of responsibilities a district officer could have, see John Morley, *Colonial Postscript: The Diary of a District Officer*, (London: Radcliffe Press, 1991).
10. Throughout the Emergency, the government referred to the insurgents by a variety of names. At first, it simply called them "bandits," hence General Briggs' title of Director of Anti-Bandit Operations. Later, it referred to them as Communist terrorists or CTs. For the purposes of this article, I will refer to the Communist insurgents by their self-appointed title of the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) or simply as "the Communists."
11. For MRLA strength, see Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750* (London: Routledge, 2001), 98; for support network figures, see "Malayan Communist Party: 1948-1960," *Britain's Small Wars*, <www.britains-smallwars.com/malaya/mcp.html>.
12. John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency from Palestine to Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 43.
13. Jones, CAB 129/28, CP(48)171.
14. Sir E. Gent, Telegram to Creech Jones, "Declaration of Emergency," 17 June 1948, CO 717/167/52849/2/1948, f 302, PRO.
15. Out of a police force of 10,000, there were an estimated 24 Chinese officers and 204 rank and file. Report of the Police Mission to Malaya, March 1950, Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1950, CO 537/5417, PRO. Documents captured by British forces in November 1949 confirmed that armed MCP cadres depended on "the support of rural workers" (Chinese squatters) for food and basic supplies. In general, the MCP claimed support from the "Chinese rural population" and some support from Chinese and Indian workers in large-scale plantations and mines. However, the MCP made little progress in penetrating the city populations. The Malayan emergency was "essentially a revolt of under administered rural areas." See "Comment on Captured MCP Document The Present Day Situation and Duties of the Malayan Communist Party," 12 May 1950, PREM 8/1406/2, MAL C(50)12, PRO.
16. Special constables supplemented regular police and part-time auxiliary police that numbered over 100,000 by the end of 1951. Lyttelton, CAB 129/48, C(51)59.
17. In a damning assessment, Field Marshal Montgomery says of del Tufo, "He has no power of command and gives out no inspiration. He is, of course, quite useless as Chief Secretary." Field Marshal Lord Montgomery, "Success in Malaya," enclosure contained in Montgomery, Letter to Winston Churchill, "Appointment of Templer," 4 January 1952, PREM 11/169, PRO.
18. J.B. Robinson, *Transformation in Malaya* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956), 149.
19. Lyttelton, CAB 129/48, C(51)59.
20. Shennan, 315-16.
21. Emanuel Shinwell, Minute to Clement Attlee, Prime Minister, "Director of Operations," 7 March 1950, PREM 8/1406/2, PRO.
22. The overview of the Briggs plan is taken from "Federation Plan for the Elimination of the Communist Organization and Armed Forces in Malaya: Report by COS for the Cabinet Malaya Committee," 24 May 1950, CAB 21/1681, MAL C(50)23, PRO.
23. Ibid.
24. "Briggs Plan," Cabinet Office Summary of a Meeting at 10 Downing Street, 27 February 1951, PREM 8/1406/2, GEN 345/6, PRO.
25. Lyttelton, CAB 129/48, C(51)59.
26. For an example of such coordination in the state of Negri Sembilan, see M.C.A. Henniker, *Red Shadow Over Malaya* (London: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd, 1955), 33-35.
27. CAB 21/1681, MAL C(50)23.
28. Discussions of JOR staff can be found in Robinson, 146-7; and Henniker, 33-35.
29. Hugh Fraser, Telegram to Oliver Lyttelton, "Reorganization of Government," 9 January 1952, CO 1022/304 no. 2, PRO.
30. Lennox A. Mills, *Malaya: A Political and Economic Appraisal* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 60-61.
31. John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 95.
32. Editorial cited in Mills, 61.
33. Chart derived from Henniker, 62, and Joel E. Hamby, "Civil-Military Operations: Joint Doctrine and the Malayan Emergency," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Autumn 2002): 56.
34. Montgomery, PREM 11/169.
35. "Gen Templer: I am eager to have a go," *The Straits Times*, 17 January 1952.
36. Cited in Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dogs* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 150.
37. For example, see Henniker, 81-92.
38. Shennan, 321.
39. Statistics issued by the Psychological Warfare Section, Ministry of Home Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, as reported in Sarkesian, 72.
40. Lyttelton, CAB 129/48, C(51)59.
41. Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 57.
42. Figures drawn from Beckett, 103. Cost of campaign in 2005 dollars was calculated using the inflation calculator at <www.westegg.com/inflation/>.
43. *Counterinsurgency Operations*, 2-13.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid, 2-2.
46. Kitson, 58. This is one of the significant problems that CORDS intended to solve.

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